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RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

Vol. 1 No. 22
October 18, 1971

Search for Mr. Surly

ON THE COVER: Imaginative artwork--reminiscent of former FLORIDA SPECIAL ads--from the first newspaper ad of Auto-Train Corp., which appeared in New York Oct. 4. Upon the appearance of this ad, Auto-Train was swamped with requests for reservations and information, so that their staff could not handle the daily input, and reservation facilities had to be expanded. Auto-Train is at 1801 K St. N.W., Washington D.C. 20006 (phone 800-424-8520).

THIS ISSUE of RTN is, as forecast, later than normal (usual mailing schedule is 7 days after issue date). During our 8-day absence--which put us behind schedule--we were riding 5239 miles of Amtrak lines over the rails of 6 railroads (SP, UP, BN, GM&O, MoPac, ATSF). There's nothing like first-hand observation to get a feeling for what's happening with current passenger service. You will find scattered comments and observations in this and succeeding issues of RTN, and a larger report in the editorial on page 15.

A NEW FEATURE beginning in this issue is EAST COAST REPORT, written by Steve Farrar. Steve is highly qualified for this job. For over 3 years he has written Passenger Train News for the HIGHBALL, publication of the Old Dominion Chapter of NRHS, and has contributed free-lance articles on rail topics to the Richmond (VA) TIMES-DISPATCH. A native of Amelia, VA, Steve is presently with the U.S. Army railway battalion at Fort Eustis. Before being drafted, he worked during college as Relief Dining & Business Car Agent at the SCL commissary in Richmond, then after graduation as management trainee for C&O/B&O in Baltimore. His first column appears on page 10.

CAPTAIN AMTRACK has been simultaneously one of the most enthusiastically received and controversial features we have introduced. Partly this is in the nature of comic strips. In McLuhan's terms, comics are a hot medium of communication, compared to print, with a relatively high density of information and a strong emotional impact. While RTN has never avoided controversy, we must admit that comics are not everybody's bag, and that for Captain Amtrack lovers a separate publication would be appropriate. Thus the good Captain will no longer appear in RTN. But watch these pages for announcement of a separate Captain Amtrack comic book. We plan to experiment with other comic strips occasionally in RTN.

NEXT ISSUE: A special issue featuring Amtrak's No. 1 train, the SUNSET LIMITED. To be mailed about November 13.

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol 1, No 22, October 18, 1971. Published twice monthly, on the 1st and 3rd Mondays, by Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. $4 a year, 25¢ a copy.
Editor: James Russell.

THE BIG FIGHT OVER AMTRAK'S FUNDING

Amtrak needs more money to keep operating. The big question now is how much money Congress should allot the corporation and whether it should exert pressure on Amtrak to alter its manner of operating in order to effect greater economy.

Amtrak originally requested $260 million for the next fiscal year, but the Office of Management and Budget pared this down to $170 million, and Secretary Volpe agreed this amount was appropriate. The Senate Commerce Committee set hearings for Oct. 26 to consider this amount.

At the hearings, the National Association of Railroad Passengers indicated support for the allotment, but urged that Congress also make changes in the Rail Passenger Act which would provide for: 1) power for parties other than the Attorney General to sue to enforce the Act; 2) obligation of Amtrak to make regular public financial and other reports; 3) Amtrak's right to use any rail line it chooses; 4) right of passenger trains to have preference over freights; 5) obligation of Amtrak to directly operate its own trains with its own personnel.

Senator Vance Hartke of Indiana, who heads the Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, thought the money request was too small and threatened not to support it. Hartke, according to the N.Y. Times, told Amtrak president Roger Lewis "It's got to be massive, it's got to be exciting, it's got to be inspirational."

Under Secretary of Transportation James Beggs said he would oppose any acceleration of new equipment purchases or service expansion. He was speaking for the Nixon Administration, which, according to the N.Y. Times, has never strongly supported Amtrak subsidies.

Supporting Senator Hartke's call for more money was Senator Lowell Weicker of Connecticut. He wanted to add to the $170 million an operating subsidy of $100 million and $150 million in loans for new equipment, new stations and track improvement. Weicker (quoted in N.Y. Times) said: "There is no cheap way to create decent rail transportation, especially when rails are still in the box of yesteryear with the highway lobby, rail corporations and the rail unions sitting on the lid." He asked for a two-year program costing $420 million.

Hartke also called for Amtrak to run its own trains and hire its own personnel, as did NARP. Both Amtrak president Lewis and Under Sec'y Beggs, however, said they were satisfied with the way the railroads are presently operating the trains under contract to Amtrak.

AMTRAK'S NEW EQUIPMENT ASSIGNMENTS

Compiled by George Drury

The table below shows how Amtrak will assign the railroad cars it has purchased to its routes. Shown are car numbers and descriptions along with the quantity of cars available. In some cases, identified by asterisks, it was not possible to determine the number of one type of car assigned to a given route. Undoubtedly there will be changes made before the new consists are finalized. Missing from the table are a number of Penn Central cars for which purchase had not been cleared.

Car Number	Qty.	Car Type
Chicago-Seattle		
GN 1200-05	6	baggage dorm
GN 1008-10	3	coach 44 seat
UP 5497-5556	64*	coach 44 seat
GN 1147	1	coach 58 seat
GN 1300-04	5	coach 58 seat
GN 1320-35	16*	dome coach 46/24
NP 494-99	5	counter lounge
CBQ 193-202	6*	diner
NP 458-63	5	diner
N&W 493	1	diner
GN 1390-95	6	dome lounge
CBQ 4900-03	4	slumber coach
NP 325-36	11*	slumbercoach
CBQ 423-36	14*	10-6
CBQ 485-93	9	10-6
UP 1401-49	43*	10-6
UP 1501-10	10	11 DB
UP 1701-07	7	11 DB
B&O 7501-	3	5 DB-lounge observation
N&W 150, 51	2	5 DB-lounge
PC 4411-15	3	5 DB-lounge
Minneapolis-Spokane (via Butte)		
CBQ 900-10	11*	baggage
NP 581-84	4	coach 48 seat
NP 586-587	2	coach 56 seat
CBQ 375-78	4	4 DB-dome-observation
Chicago-Denver		
CBQ 900-10	11*	baggage
CBQ 4742-44	3	coach 48 seat
CBQ 4731-41	9	coach 50 seat
CBQ 4716-22	7	dome coach 46/24
CBQ 4735-35	2	dome coach 46/24
CBQ 250-54	5*	dome-coffee shop-dorm
CBQ 193-202	6*	diner
PC 4200-08	7*	slumbercoach
CBQ 423-36	14*	10-6
SCL 6100-05	6*	11DB
Chicago-Oakland		
SCL 5010-25	16*	baggage dorm
ATSF 2861-2960	79*	coach 44 seat
ATSF 2816-36	19*	coach 48 seat
SCL 5900-25	25*	diner
CBQ 450-54	5	6 DB-5 C
SCL 6610-52	21*	10-6
SCL 6800-02	3	6 R-3 DR-dome
SCL 6600-07	8*	6 DB-lounge
SCL 5840-51	8*	tavern observation
Chicago-Los Angeles		
ATSF3477-82	6	baggage-dorm
ATSF 526-49	24*	hilevel coach 68 seat
ATSF 700-36	37*	hilevel coach 72 seat
ATSF 575-80	6	hilevel lounge
ATSF 650-55	6	hilevel diner
ATSF 601-06	6	diner
ATSF 500-05	6	dome-lounge
NP 325-36	11*	slumbercoach
ATSF 1601-43	36*	10-6
ATSF 902-12	11	11 DB
ATSF 1804-35	21*	4-4-2
Chicago-Houston		
ATSF 3650-83	32*	baggage
ATSF 526-49	24*	hilevel coach 68 seat
ATSF 1477-98	14*	diner
ATSF 1372, 78, 91	3	dorm-lounge
ATSF 1601-43	36*	10-6
ATSF 1804-35	21*	4-4-2
Seattle-Portland		
CBQ 900-10	11*	baggage
CBQ 4709-14	2	dome coach 34/24
ATSF 3138-66	12	coach 52 seat
ATSF 1398, 99	2	coach lounge
Seattle-Los Angeles		
ATSF 3500-54	48*	baggage
ATSF 2861-2960	79*	coach 44 seat
GN 1320-35	16*	dome coach 46/24
ATSF 1477-98	14*	diner
ATSF 1339-44	6	dorm-lounge
ATS 1601-43	36*	10-6
ATSF 1804-35	21*	4-4-2
NP 375-80	5*	6R-4DB-lounge-dome
Los Angeles-New Orleans		
ATSF 3500-54	48*	baggage
ATSF 2837-60	24*	coach 48 seat
ATSF 700-736	37*	hilevel coach 72 seat
ATSF 1477-98	14*	diner
ATSF 1339-44	6	dorm-lounge
ATSF 1601-43	36*	10-6
ATSF 1804-35	21*	4-4-2
NP 375-80	5*	6R-4DB-dome-lounge
Los Angeles-San Diego		
N&W 650	1	baggage-counter-lounge
ATSF 2837-60	24*	coach 48 seat
ATSF 700-36	37*	hilevel coach 72 seat
CBQ 4723, 24	2	dome coach 50/24
ATSF 1347, 49	2	coach-bar
Oakland-Los Angeles		
ATSF 3500-54	48*	baggage
CBQ 800, 01	2	baggage lounge
ATSF 2837-60	24*	coach 48 seat
GN 1320-34	16*	dome coach 46/24
ATSF 1477-98	14*	diner
CBQ 360, 61	2	dome-parlor-observation
Chicago-St. Louis		
C&O 1402	1	baggage-coach
CBQ 4725-30	6*	dome coach 54/24
SCL 5265-71	7	coach 62 seat
SP 10407-11	5*	diner-lounge
CBQ 365,66	2	dome-parlor-observation
Chicago-Detroit		
RFP 801-06	6	coach 54 seat
SPS 309	1	coach 61 seat
CBQ 4725-30	6*	dome coach 54/24
SCL 5810-12	3*	coach-lounge
Detroit-Milwaukee		
CBQ 250-54	5*	dome-coffee shop-dorm
CBQ 235, 36	2	dome-parlor-lounge
Chicago-Milwaukee		
NP 527-32	6	coach 64 seat
PC 3201-22	6*	snackbar coach 50 seat
Chicago-Carbondale		
N&W 502	1	coach 52 seat
L&N 3239-64	18	coach 60 seat
SCL 5810-12	3*	coach-lounge
NP 492, 93	2*	parlor-lounge
N&W 1601	1	dome-parlor-observation
Chicago-New Orleans		
ATSF 3650-83	32*	baggage
SCL 5000, 02	2	baggage
UP 5479-5556	64*	coach 44 seat
N&W 1704-09	6	coach 52 seat
NP 549-58	8*	dome coach 46/24
L&N 3240, 41, 45	3	coach-snack bar
L&N 2800-02	3	diner-counter-lounge
Washington-Parkersburg		
C&O 1610, 11	2	coach-diner
Chicago-Florida		
RFP 844	1	baggage-dorm
ATSF 1380-85	4	baggage-dorm
ATSF 2816-36	19*	coach 48 seat
SCL 5130-34	5	coach 50 seat
SCL 5250-64	15	coach 52 seat
NP 549-58	8*	dome coach 46/24
L&N 2790	1	diner
SCL 5900-25	25*	diner
SCL 6610-52	21*	10-6
SCL 6106-11	5	11 DB
NP 304-14	5	8R-4DB-dome
Chicago-Newport News/Washington		
ATSF 3650-83	32*	baggage
UP 5479-5556	64*	coach 44 seat
CBQ 4725-30	6*	dome coach 54/24
N&W 1610-12	3	dome coach 56/24
B&O 5550, 51	2	dome coach-snack bar
C&O 1920-22	3	diner-lounge
UP 1401-49	43*	10-6
B&O 1351	1	baggage-dorm-lounge
New York-Buffalo		
PC 7182-90	4*	baggage-lounge
SCL 5450-68	19	coach 50 seat
RFP 810-12	3	coach 54 seat
PC 3201-22	6*	snack bar coach 50 seat
CBQ 320, 21	2	dome-coffee shop-coach
New York-Buffalo-Chicago		
SCL 5030-32	3	baggage-coach-dorm
UP 5479-5556	64*	coach 44 seat
SCL 5950-61	12*	diner
UP 1401-49	43*	10-6
New York-Pittsburgh		
SCL 5469-73	5	coach 54 seat
SCL 5800-02	3	coach lounge
New York-Pittsburgh-Chicago, Washington-Chicago, New York-Kansas City		
SCL 5010-25	16*	baggage dorm
UP 5479-5556	64*	coach 44 seat
RFP 861, 62	2	coach 62 seat
CBQ 340, 41	2	snack coach
C&O 1701	1	snack coach
C&O 1923-25	3	diner-dorm
SCL 5900-25	25*	diner
PC 4200-08	7	slumbercoach
UP 1401-49	43*	10-6
UP 1701-7	7*	11 DB
SCL 6100-05	6*	11 DB
PC 4381	1	11 DB
Washington-Kansas City		
ATSF 3500-54	48*	baggage
N&W 1051	1	diner-lounge
SP 10407-11	5*	diner-lounge

* not all cars in this group assigned to this train

seating capacity for dome coaches shown lower/upper

Boston-New York

GN 1145, 46	2	coach-diner
GN 1195, 96	2	parlor-observation

Boston-Washington

PC 7182-90	4*	baggage-lounge
SCL 5400-17	18	coach 54 seat
SCL 5474-80	7	coach 54 seat
SCL 5600-28	29	coach 56 seat
PC 3190-99	10	coach 72 seat
PC 3231-43	12*	snack bar coach 72 seat
PC 7130-45	16*	parlor-galley
PC 7174, 75	2*	parlor-bar-lounge
PC 7123, 24	2	parlor
PC 7146, 47	2	7 drawing-room parlor
NP 492, 93	2*	parlor-lounge

New York-Philadelphia

PC 1425-30	6	coach 56 seat
PC 2900-59	9	coach 56 seat
PC 3231-43	12	coach 72 seat
PC 1568-99	30	coach 60 seat 14 smoker
PC 1500-47	46	coach 64 seat 12 smoker
PC 1480-88	9	coach 72 seat 12 smoker
PC 4437-47	3	bar-club-lounge
PC 7174, 75	2*	parlor-bar-lounge
PC 7130-45	16*	parlor-galley
PC 7126-29	4	parlor-buffet-lounge

New York-Florida

ATSF 3500-54	48*	baggage
SCL 5010-25	16*	baggage-dorm
SP 3102-06	4	baggage-dorm
SP 2225-37	13	coach 44 seat
SP 2362-78	17	coach 44 seat
SP 2220-24	4	coach 48 seat-snack
RFP 850-57	7	coach 52 seat
SCL 5100-23	16	coach 50 seat
SCL 5200-12	13	coach 52 seat
SCL 5900-25	25*	diner
SCL 5950-61	12*	diner
SP 10210-15	5	diner
SF 2938-92	5	lounge
SCL 5830-6	7*	tavern-lounge
SCL 6700-07	8	budget-room coach
SCL 6610-52	21*	10-6
SP 9000-23	20	10-6
SP 9400-03	4	12 DB
SP 9118-20	3	4-4-2
SCL 6520-22	3	5DB-2C-2DR
SCL 6200-05	7	7DB-2DR
SCL 6500-02	3	5DB-lounge
SCL 6600-07	8*	6DB-lounge
PC 4433-36	4	6DB-lounge
SCL 5841-51	8*	tavern-observation

Pool

ATSF 3939-99	10	baggage
ATSF 2791-2814	7	coach 48 seat
ATSF 1550-65	8	counter diner
ATSF 1569-77	9	dorm-counter diner
ATSF 208-23	9	10R-3DB-2C

From the above table you can determine the type of equipment Amtrak plans to place on your favorite train on or about Nov. 14. To find the SUPER CHIEF, for example, look under "Chicago-Los Angeles," where you find that the same equipment as before is to be used, with the exception of the addition of NP slubercoaches.

Some trains will be completely changed; for example the COAST DAYLIGHT (Oakland-Los Angeles) which now has all SP equipment will shortly have none, becoming a mixture of Santa Fe, Burlington and Great Northern cars. Parlor car service will be restored, using a Burlington dome-parlor-observation (a square-end rear observation car). It will also carry at least one other dome from a set of Great Northern dome coaches. Replacing the automat food cars will be Santa Fe dining cars. What happens to the SP coaches? They will go into New York-Florida trains, as will some SP sleepers and diners. The only other SP equipment to be used by Amtrak will be the "Pride of Texas" diner-lounges on the Chicago-St. Louis and Washington-Kansas City runs. (These are already in use Chicago-St. Louis).

It's obvious that train watchers will be having a field day shortly, observing equipment shifts around the country, and photographing first and last runs with completely altered trains.

KEEPING TRACK

...with Paul Rayton

(A regular RTN feature. Each issue presents another review-critique of a selected pre-Amtrak train.)

SOUTHERN CRESCENT (Part II)

Date: December 31, 1970

When we reached Birmingham we had fallen several more minutes behind schedule, besides which there was an unbelievably long station stop. Nobody seemed to know why, really, but here we sat. I later determined that the large bunch which was going to board here had become discouraged with waiting out in the middle of the vast wasteland that is the Birmingham "station" (all flat ground, not a building within 100 yards—they'd all been torn down) and had adjourned to some nearby bar. Finally they joined up, whooping and joking, already in high spirits (despite—or because of—our lateness) and ready to go "howlin'" tonight (New Year's Eve) in New Orleans. Many cracks like "do you think we'll make it? Hah hah!"

My wife and I grabbed seats in the dome again, before the milling herd swarmed in. The train backed out of the "station" and gave us a Vista Dome view of a steel factory standing black, massive and silent, like a sentinel, ready to send forth new rails should we need them. By now we were 55 minutes late.

During the afternoon we viewed a lot of particularly significant countryside: Tuscaloosa and (near) Selma, Alabama, and Meridian, Mississippi. All points of interest and, in a sense, historic too, for they all have contributed dramatic scenarios in the ongoing struggle of the Blacks to achieve more equal status.

I felt really introspective, seeing first hand some living conditions that would be unimaginable and unimagined to the average suburb dweller. I truly felt that I had gained at least a little better comprehension of some of the issues after absorbing the geography of the area. Anything that helps to improve understanding of a situation as complex and emotion-charged as this is valuable. Of course you can ride thru here and ignore the whole thing if you want to...

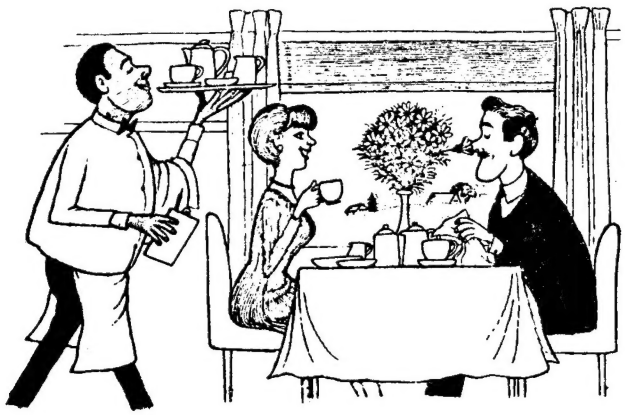
One note of irony in this context was the soap. No kidding! Of all the brands of soap to put in the sleeping cars, what brand do they use? "White King"! It seemed to me that that bespoke a certain disregard for the feelings of the employees. Why did they have to use that soap on that route, thru the heart of the deep South?

And we (predictably) had still not picked up any of our lost time and we lost more time standing in Meridian waiting for a red light to clear. Sitting in the dome as dusk overtook the stalled SOUTHERN CRESCENT, we listened to elderly folks reminisce about old times and their trip on the COLORADO EAGLE some years ago, and their trip thru Royal Gorge in a dome car.

I found it interesting that these people, and all the others who boarded in Birmingham, would use a train for their travel to New Orleans. At least one group was a private party, with their own car complete with their own bartender, going down to the Sugar Bowl game. They were using the train, though, and they were hardly the "indigents" which, according to Hilton and some other critics of rail passenger service, are the only types found traveling in (ugh) trains.

It developed that some of these people who boarded in Birmingham had come there by bus from Nashville to catch the train. Why? Because they felt the L&N service thru Nashville was too erratic. The L&N had the last laugh that day, though, for the PAN AMERICAN had arrived in New Orleans on time.

Since none of the crew on the SOUTHERN CRESCENT wanted to bother turning off the lights in the dome (for better evening see-ability) I put my knowledge of RR systems to work and shut them off myself. It was neat up in the dome as the last red tinges left the clouds above us and gradually more and more stars came out. Finally we started moving again and rolled out into the Mississippi forests. The moon was big and darted in and out of clouds. Green signals would shift to red away up in the distance, then magically grow larger and larger, ultimately zipping past in a blur outside the dome window.



Dinner time! The same menu as last night, but this time we are going to live it up with the special Charcoal Broiled Sirloin Steak dinner, for $5.50 (we waited until tonight for this, rather than have it last night; previous experience told me that any steak we might want in the next two days on the SUNSET would cost me $7.00 and be worth half that amount). The dinner was as good as the night before, and this time we had four choices of salad dressings. I have one major reservation about the dinner, though—the steak was not so great. It was tender and served in adequate portion, but for some reason it tasted vaguely of refrigeration (freon), from either incorrect or too-long storage. At any rate it was sorely deficient in the taste department.

Another major complaint I have is that there is not one drop of wine available for dining purposes. There is a beverage list ("Buffet Service") in use, listing various mixed drinks, beer, and like that. It seems to be an "all or nothing" train, though, for here they list no less than six different bourbons!

"It was spooky, really. How deep was the water, I wondered? And how far were we from solid land?"

The last miles into New Orleans are some of the prettiest miles of the trip. During this time you cross Lake Pontchartrain on a causeway/bridge. It was particularly stunning with the clear, crisp winter air. Lights around the lake were winking little Morse code messages over the waves. It was spooky, really. You could see the waves breaking on the rocks of the causeway with a frothy splash; beyond that it was just black black black. How deep was the water, I wondered? And how far were we from solid land? The stars still shone down, but they didn't answer the questions, even if they knew.

Completing the lake crossing, we entered almost immediately into residential areas at the extremities of New Orleans. I thought that we had perhaps made up some of our lost time —as did all the others on board, who were now really anxious to start their reveling--but we hadn't anticipated the inevitable long, slow ride thru the outer environs. We idled along, ignominiously being passed by traffic on a paralleling freeway. I fidgeted in my seat, "Why do they do this to us?"

We were rewarded, though, for from back yards all around us small home displays of New Year's Eve fireworks were lighting up the sky. And that, from a moving dome car, is really a fantastic sight. I would suspect New Orleans to be the only U.S. city with both the temperament and the layout (not to mention train schedule) that permits a display of this nature. They should do it every night for the train!

"We were treated to seeing another train arrive—the SUNSET dragging in, almost 2 hours late. Good thing it got in, though..."

After several false stops, we finally were backed into NOUPT and alighted at 9:40pm, 1¼ hours late. We were, incidentally, treated to seeing another train arrive some 15 minutes later—the SUNSET dragging in, almost 2 hours late. Good thing it got in, though, or we wouldn't have had anything to go out on tomorrow.

Before leaving the SOUTHERN CRESCENT, I'd like to add several comments: First of all, the observations contained herein were more or less confirmations of previous observations. I had ridden this train 4 months earlier from Atlanta to Washington, and the following notations described that trip: 1) late by 1 hour, and didn't make it up; 2) bumpy roadbed; and 3) the steak had a "refrigerator" taste. On neither trip did the Porter shine my shoes, despite quarters hopefully deposited.

Secondly, on that previous trip we rode in the train's "Master Room" (a drawing room with a separate shower compartment), the last daily-operated accomodation with that special amenity. The car containing this room was actually a sleeper/lounge, with a bedroom ("A"), a drawing room ("B"), and then the Master Room ("C") near the center of the car. Unlike the shower on the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, this shower is a complete stand-up stall shower. The shower and lavatory are built in an adjacent room, with about as much room as two roomettes, less seats and beds. A very spacious accomodation. The entrance to this room is at the center of the area, so that you may shave while another is showering, if you wish.

"A horrible dust blew up thru the open hole and coated everything in the room with a fine layer of rails and brakes"

Unfortunately, there is a major design flaw in the execution of this room: the drain for the shower is a small hole, covered by a "top" not unlike an automotive crankcase oil filler cap. As the train moved along, noise and a horrible pervading dust blew up thru the open hole and coated everything in the room with a fine layer of rails and brakes, making the air quite hard to breathe. I finally solved this problem by wrapping a wet towel around the drain, sealing us from the asphyxiating dust.

So much for the asides. The next order of business was to get into town and join the fun. My next article will resume with the trip leaving the next day on the SUNSET.

BACK ISSUES

All reprintable back issues have now been reprinted, and we are in the process of filling back orders.

The following issues are no longer available: 8, 9, 10, 13, 15. No. 7 is almost gone.

We must ask you to specify second choices with future orders. If we cannot fill all your requests, we will add to your existing subscription, copy for copy, if you are a current subscriber. Please advise us how to handle any overpayment if you do not wish it applied to your subscription.

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East Coast Report

by Steve Farrar

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AMTRAK'S ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN BEGINS

The Ted Bates Agency, which handles Amtrak's advertising, began running radio spots about Oct. 1 in New York and Washington, promoting the Metroliners. The reason for concentrating upon the Metroliners, according to James Benham, head of Ted Bates, is that they represent the best service in the country and the "service of the future."

The first Metroliner newspaper ads appeared Oct. 12 & 13 in New York, Washington, Philadelphia and Baltimore (see QUOTES, p.11). They showed a front view of an airplane running on railroad tracks. Ahead of the plane, a white-frocked crew of rather inept-appearing workers hammered, welded, and worked over the track in some apparently hasty attempt to make the plane adhere to the rails.

Two other Amtrak newspaper ads also appeared in October. Both carried the message "We're making the trains worth traveling again. (All we ask from you is a little patience)." One pictured a man with multiple arms flailing about like an octopus, apparently trying to do too many jobs at once. The other showed a man standing in the middle of a track, holding a large model of a railroad coach bearing Amtrak logos. The ad explained what Amtrak is and what problems it is up against. "It may not be the country's biggest headache. But it's close. That's why when we took over we made only one simple promise. To make the trains worth traveling again. It's going to take time, and work. But we're going to do it. Just be patient, please."

The ad went on to explain about equipment purchases and planned refurbishing.

"You talk—we listen. For the first time there are passenger represnetatives riding our trains just to listen to travelers and get your ideas about rail service. You've already made it clear that you want your trains a lot cleaner than they've been in the past. And they will be.

"Eat a little better. Right now we're concerned with making sure that you get a real good dinner every time you enter our dining cars. And that even a snack in an Amtrak coach is always fresh and tasty. But in the future we hope to let that gourmet streak in us come out and surprise you."

The ad concluded by mentioning efforts toward faster and simpler reservatior procedures, and better schedules.

This first corporate ad by Amtrak will run in newspapers in the East and Midwest, and in the Wall Street Journal, Life, Ebony, and the 3 weekly news magazines.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

AMTRAK REVISED its July 12 schedule slightly in a second printing of 500,000, identifiable by the words "7/71—2 Ed. Rev" on page 1... ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA was added as a stop for PC/Amtrak Nos. 68-69 Aug.20... NARP IS SUEING Attorney General Mitchell for failure to enforce the Amtrak Act in allowing Rio Grande to drop its rail connection between Ogden & Salt Lake City (it substituted a bus)... OUR CITY OF S.F. trip to Chicago saw SP lose 1¼ hrs thru the Sierras following slow freights. However UP made up the time easily in Wyoming with greatly padded schedules. We sat ½-hr at some small Wyoming towns waiting for departure time. But we hit Denver 10 mins late due to a red light near Greeley. There the CITY was coupled to the rear of the BN DENVER ZEPHYR as a crew member remarked: "Now we'll really sail" We maintained high speeds all the way to Chicago, but far faster than the track could take. The train jerked, jolted, jounced and swayed along the entire length of bad BN track. Sleep was almost impossible even in a good UP sleeper. The dining car swayed so badly my signature came out illegible on my charge card form. The 10 mins were finally made up just before Chicago. Rough riding was not all due to track. The engineers hotrodded that 15-car train (pulled by 3 E8's) with unbelievable acceleration and fast, jerky stops... SURPRISE OF the trip was the excellent track on MoPac, riding the SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS. Freights kept out of our way, running in the same direction on a parallel track. The contrast with BN was most striking...AIRLINER CRASH in Peoria was main conversation topic with businessmen on ABE LINCOLN Oct. 21. Some riders had just missed taking the commuter plane in which 16 died. Others had flown in it to Chicago that morning. The SP "Pride of Texas" diner-lounge on the ABE LINCOLN sported a hi-fi tape recorder playing good jazzy music that really enlived the spirits of the train. In contrast, the ancient Farnsworth music system of the SUPER CHIEF played endless tunes of the 1950s with a dreadful waver in pitch that drove me out of the dome. When local radio stations were picked up, things improved considerably... RIDING IN PC coach 2904 on SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS, I admired the new blue interior paint. While examining paint in restroom, a cockroach came out of a crack and was quickly dispatched with a paper towel. One of PC's famous stowaways from Washington... SUPER CHIEF struck a cow in Kansas Oct. 24 and was delayed 30 mins. However L.A. arrival was on time. The bloodied engine with a broken fuel line was removed and we managed the Raton Pass with only 5 units... CHAMPAGNE DINNER on SUPER CHIEF is touch and go Sundays. New Mexico law prohibits liquor sale, and you must hope to reach Arizona before the diner closes...

COMMUTING AND RAPID TRANSIT

Trying to Save the 30-cent Fare

By the time New York State subscribers read these lines, the Nov. 2 election will have come and gone, and the fate of the 30¢ New York fare decided. The outcome hinged on the passage of a $2.5 million transportation bond issue. New York city and state officials had come to an agreement that the 30¢ fare would be retained if the bond issue was passed by the voters. The plan to find the money to keep down fares came out this way: Use $85 million a year from the bond issue for capital improvements instead of taking them from fares; Increase tolls on Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority facilities; Borrow $100 million over two years from the city; and obtain another $100 million either in Federal grants or state loans.

How Denver's Transit System was Saved

The Denver Tramway Company operated Denver's buses until last spring when deficits forced them to give up. Since then, the Denver Metro Transit (DMT) has come into being. DMT is a public transit system receiving high praise from nearly everyone concerned. It is operated by the A.T.E. management firm of Cincinnati and subsidized by the city of Denver. On Sept. 27 DMT made widespread changes in the bus system. New routes were added and others expanded, a total of 2000 vehicle miles per day being added. Sections of the city were color-coded, and colored flags on buses indicate their destination. Young ladies handed out bus schedules downtown. Radio spots urged motorists to take the bus. The regular fare was cut from 40 to 35 cents. Children pay 20 cents. Discount cards permitting a 25¢ adult fare can be obtained for senior citizens, physically handicapped, etc., and for other adults during non-rush hours. Since taking over the transit system, A.T.E. has reversed a long-time decline in bus ridership. Kansas City may be the next city to contract with A.T.E. to operate its transit system.

Bigger Buses for Interstate Highways Proposed

The American Trucking Association, with nine full-time Washington lobbyists and a yearly budget of about $75,000, is one of the supporters of a bill passed by the House in July that would permit buses six inches wider on Interstate Highways. Truckers believe Senate passage of the bill would pave the way for bigger, heavier trucks as well. The National Transportation Safety Board is cool to the proposal.

EDITORIAL: THE SEARCH FOR MR. SURLY

We have just returned from over 5000 miles of Amtrak riding--not to mention a few commute trains--and our head is full of strong impressions of contemporary train travel in America.

The COAST DAYLIGHT, the SUPER CHIEF, the SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS, the ABRAHAM LINCOLN, the CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO-DENVER ZEPHYR--these are the trains we were able to sample. We watched and photographed many others from the outside. We sampled the menus of all these trains (except, in the interests of good digestion, the COAST DAYLIGHT), felt the roadbeds, talked with passengers, train personnel, station employees.

The most striking thing we can report about this adventure is that nowhere in all our travels did we find Mr. Surly, that infamous railroad man of ill temper whose primary function is to drive away rail travelers. He seems to have disappeared with the advent of Amtrak. Everywhere we went, rail personnel were almost amazingly courteous, friendly and helpful.

Not wishing to be cynical, we nevertheless suggest that this welcome transformation is not due to anything Amtrak has done, but rather can be attributed to the existence of Amtrak, to the spark of hope that the National Railroad Passenger Act has kindled, and perhaps to the knowledge that in the interests of economy some heads may roll and one had better be on one's best behavior. Whatever the reason, this change in morale is an important factor that makes the trains worth traveling again.

While we find train travel quite pleasant just as it is, it is also quite evident that the quality of service varies widely from one railroad to another. This is a function of the fact that the trains are by and large running much the same as they were before Amtrak. The SUPER CHIEF is still super, and the COAST DAYLIGHT is still suffering from all the years of SP's downgrading, to mention two extremes. In order to establish quality control over its system, it will be necessary for Amtrak to hire its own personnel and have direct control over the operations of its trains, rather than contract with individual railroads to run the trains in their own idiosyncratic ways.

Another inevitable reason for needing Amtrak's direct control over passenger train operations lies in the economics of the situation. Rail travel will never be able to make a comeback unless certain economies are instituted. Excess personnel and expensive and unnecessarily large station facilities are two big factors causing passenger trains to run at a deficit. If Amtrak were the direct employer of rail personnel, the corporation could negotiate new contracts with them incorporating modernized work rules.

A long rail trip highlights another factor relating to quality control. The roadbeds of different railroads differ markedly in quality, many of them being maintained in a condition suitable only for freight trains. We rode several grades of rails, from the MoPac (best) to the BN (worst). These varied from excruciatingly bad to very smooth and comfortable. Uniformity of rail maintenance is a must if a nationwide system of passenger trains is to be supported. We strongly agree with the National Association of Railroad Passengers that government ownership of the rails is the appropriate solution to this problem. Just as the Interstate Highways are Federally owned and maintained, so too should the roadbeds of the nation's railroads be owned and maintained to a high uniform standard.

Amtrak, our trip on your trains was most pleasurable. Every train ran on time, every employee was pleasant. The inherent fun of train travel was not prevented from emerging. After what we've suffered thru for so many years, that's quite an accomplishment.

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